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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE TO INCREASE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ATTORNEYS

¶1. The Ministry of Law recently announced plans to increase the supply of attorneys eligible to practice law in Singapore. Its decision reflects the recommendations of the Third Committee on Supply of Lawyers, appointed in December 2005, which was tasked with exploring how best to respond to increased demand for legal services, especially in the areas of international arbitration, banking and finance, and corporate law.

¶2. MinLaw proposes the following changes:

-- allowing certain honors graduates (Singapore citizens and permanent residents) of recognized overseas law schools to practice domestic law. These law schools include those on the list of "Scheduled Universities" and those agreed to in Singapore's bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs). Singapore currently recognizes four law degrees under our FTA: Harvard, Columbia, New York University, and the University of Michigan.

-- allowing foreign lawyers who meet specific criteria and pass qualifying tests to practice domestic corporate, finance and banking law;

-- creation of a second law school under the Singapore Management University enrolling about 90 students annually; and

-- increasing the annual intake of law students at the National University of Singapore from 220 to 250 students;

¶3. MinLaw tells us that legislative changes will probably be required to implement some of these recommendations. It is aiming to begin presenting these to Parliament for approval when it next sits in November.

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